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PRESS RELEASE

MUSLIM BANGLADESHI-AMERICAN U.S. NAVY CHAPLAIN ABUHENA SAIFULISLAM VISITS BANGLADESH

DHAKA, MARCH 3 -- United States Navy Lieutenant Commander Abuhena Saifulislam recently visited Bangladesh on a program sponsored by U.S. Embassy Dhaka. During his visit, he met with religious leaders, representatives of civil society, and Bangladeshi military counterparts. He also traveled to areas that suffered damage during Cyclone Sidr in order to obtain a first-hand perspective on relief and rehabilitation efforts funded by the United States Government.

LCDR Saifulislam was born in Bangladesh and immigrated to the United States prior to joining the U.S. Navy and becoming a Muslim Chaplain. In that role, he serves as a religious counselor to military servicemen and women from all religious faiths. During his visit to Bangladesh, he discussed the U.S. military's chaplaincy program, his personal experience living as a Muslim and an Imam in the U.S., and his commitment to assisting people of all faiths. This was LCDR Saifulislam's first return visit to Bangladesh in 14 years.

The American Center in Dhaka hosted a roundtable discussion with religious leaders, during which LCDR Saifulislam participated in a lively discussion on what it means to be a Muslim, both in Bangladesh and the United States. The Chaplain shared his experiences teaching Americans about Islam through his daily life. At the invitation of leaders from the Islamic Foundation, LCDR Saifulislam visited the National Mosque and participated in a discussion concerning the importance of upholding Islamic values. The Chaplain also met with Madrassa teachers, headmasters, and students and answered questions about his experiences as a Muslim living in the United States.

Chaplain Saifulislam also traveled to Sylhet and met with a group of academics at the American Corner in that city. During a visit to Southwestern Bangladesh, he was able to meet with people affected by cyclone Sidr. When asked about the U.S. Government's commitment to

the region's post-cyclone rehabilitation and reconstruction, LCDR Saifulislam stated that he was proud of the American response in providing emergency relief support immediately following the cyclone. He noted that the United States continues to work with NGOs and the Government of Bangladesh on the rehabilitation efforts. He toured the cyclone affected areas and learned about current US-funded projects that are rebuilding livelihoods and infrastructure.

On the eve of his departure, the Chaplain participated in a State Department sponsored webchat with audience members in Bangladesh and around the world. The transcript of this event will be posted when available on the U.S. Embassy's website <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>. LCDR Saifulislam was also a guest on an ATN Bangla television talk show.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this article is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)